

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TORONTO 0769

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, CA
SUBJECT: PROVINCIAL LIBERALS NEGATIVE REGARDING PARTY'S FUTURE

REF: (AL TORONTO A-34, MARCH 17, 1977; (B) TORONTO 768

1. LIBERAL MEMBERS OF ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY MARGARET CAMPBELL AND PHILIP GIVENS WERE MY LUNCHEON GUESTS MARCH 30 AND SURPRISED ME WITH THEIR STRENGTH OF FEELING REGARDING THE PROVINCIAL LIBERALS' CHANCES SHOULD AN ELECTION TAKE PLACE THIS SUMMER, ATTITUDES TOWARD THE FEDERAL LIBERAL PARTY AND PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU AND PRACTICAL THOUGHTS ON QUEBEC AS AN ISSUE IN ONTARIO. FORMER LIBERAL LEADER ROBERT NIXON WAS PREVENTED AT THE LAST MINUTE FROM JOINING US. BOTH MRS. CAMPBELL AND MR. GIVENS CAM TO PROVINCIAL POLITICS THROUGH YEARS INT TORONTO CITY POLITICS, GIVENS HAVING BEEN MAYOR OF TORONTO AS WELL AS ALDERMAN AND MRS. CAMPBELL AN ALDERMAN AND PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL.

2. IN FRANK DISCUSSION, THEY TOLD US THAT IF PROVINCIAL ELECTION HELD THIS YEAR, TORIES WOULD BE RETURNED WITH MAJORITY GOVERNMENT AND THAT PREMIER DAVIS' GOVERNMENT
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SEEMS TO HAVE COVERED EVERY ISSUE IN MARCH 30 SPEECH FROM THRONE. MRS. CAMPBELL NOTED THAT EVEN QUEBEC ISSUE, WHICH PROVINCIAL LIBERAL LEADER SMITH PUSHING WITHOUT APPARENT POSITIVE VOTER REACTION, TO BE TAKEN AWAY BY DAVIS-CALLED CONFERENCE ON CONFEDERATION IN JUNE (REF A).

3. BOTH LEGISLATORS, REPRESENTING URBAN TORONTO RIDINGS,

NOTED THAT PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU AS POPULAR IN THEIR RIDINGS AS "SKUNK AT GARDEN PARTY" BUT THAT NO ALTERNATIVE EXISTS. GIVENS NOTED THAT HE HAD GIVEN UP FEDERAL POLICIES (MP - YORK WEST 1968-71) AND ENTERED PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS AFTER BECOMING DISGUSTED WITH TRUDEAU'S ARROGANCE AS LEADER. NEITHER GUEST FELT MUCH BETTWE ABOUT JOHN TURNER, BOTH INSTANTLY REACTING TO QUESTION REGARDING TURNER BY RECALLING HOW THEN MINISTER OF FINANCE HAD RESIGNED 2 WEEKS BEFORE LAST ONTARIO PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS (DESPITE EFFORTS BY FEDERAL POLITICIANS SUCH AS DONALD MACDONALD TO DELAY THIS ACTION) MATERIALLY

HURTING THE PROVINCIAL LIBERALS IN THOSE ELECTIONS.

4. MRS. CAMPBELL AND MR. GIVENS FULLY AGREED WITH WHAT I HAD HEARD PREVIOUSLY FROM THE TORIES AND NDP THAT QUEBEC IS REALLY

A NON-ISSUE IN ONTARIO POLITICS EVEN AMONG FRANCOPHONES. BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THEIR RIDINGS, BOTH ARE VERY SENSITIVE TO ETHNIC GROUPS AND MRS. CAMPBELL EXPLAINED THAT MAJOR PROBLEM IN URBAN RIDING IS THAT MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS, ENCOURAGED BY GOVERNMENT POLICY TO SEEK OWN IDENTIFICATION, QUESTIONED THE SPECIAL TREATMENT OF ANOTHER AND OFTEN SMALLER MINORITY GROUP (I.E., QUEBECKERS) AS THEY HAVE, AS NEW CANADIANS, NO GREAT SENSITIVITY FOR THE HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF CANADA AND, AS GIVENS PUT IT, CONSIDER SUCH A LOAD OF BALONEY, NEITHER SAW MUCH REALISM IN EFFORTS TO CONVINCE QUEBEC TO STAY IN CONFEDERATION, AND, IN FACT, SAW THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY IN THE PROBABILITY THAT NO MATTER HOW SUCCESSFUL THE PQ MIGHT BE IN ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROVINCE, THE PARTICULAR WORSENING ECONOMIC SITUATION

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IN QUEBEC WOULD PROBABLY TURN THE VOTERS AGAINST THE PQ OVER THE COMING YEARS.

5. REACTION TO QUESTIONS REGARDING LAST WEEKEND'S FEDERAL LIBERAL POLICY CONFERENCE IN TORONTO, DESCRIBED BY LOCAL MEDIA AS NON-EVENT, WAS THAT PRESENTATION OF DIVERSE VIEWS NATURALLY GAVE CONFUSED PICTURE. GIVENS CONTINUED THAT RECENT TRUDEAU STRENGTH IN POLLS CLOSED LIBERAL RANKS; HE OBSERVED THAT IF FAVORABLE POLLS HAD NOT IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED CONFERENCE, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN STRONG CRITICISM OF LEADERSHIP BY PARTY RANK AND FILE IN CONFERENCE COMMENTS.

6. COMMENT: WHAT WAS MOST IMPRESSIVE FROM OUR MEETING WAS THAT, WHILE BOTH CAMPBELL AND GIVENS ARE INDIVIDUALLY INTELLIGENT, ACTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL POLITICIANS, THE LIBERAL PARTY, ITS ORGANIZATION AND PHILOSOPHY, SEEM IN COMPLETE DISSARAY BOTH FEDERALLY AND PROVINCIALY, THE STRENGTH OF DISLIKE FOR BOTH TRUDEAU AND TURNER, THE ADMISSION OF LIMITED ABILITY TO COUNTER THE TORIES PROVINCIALY AND THE GENERALLY

NEGATIVE ATTITUDE AND LACK OF DIRECTION REGARDING THE FUTURE,
ALL SUGGESTED THAT THE LIBERALS HAVE REAL PROBLEMS. WHILE
THE OVERALL QUESTION OF CANADA'S FUTURE, BOTH ECONOMIC AND
POLITICAL, IS VERY CONFUSED, AND ANYONE WHO PROFESSES
TO HAVE THE ANSWER IS QUESTIONABLE, MY LIBERAL PARTY GUESTS
CONVEYED TO ME A SENSE OF INSECURITY MUCH STRONGER THAN
EVEN THEIR SEVEREST CRITICS HAVE SUGGESTED.
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